

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

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their theology. The Abipones think the Pleiades to be the representation of their grandfather; and as that constellation disappears at certain periods from the sky of South America, upon such occasions, they suppose that their grandfather is sick, and are under a yearly apprehension that he is going to die: but as soon as those seven stars are again visible in the month of May, they welcome their grandfather, as if returned and restored from sickness, with joyful shouts, and the festive sound of pipes and trumpets, congratulating him on the recovery of his health. *Quemen naachic latenc! laydm nauichi end? Ta yegdm! Layamini!* What thanks do we owe thee! and art thou returned at last? Ah! thou hast happily recovered!—With such exclamations, expressive of their joy and their folly, do they fill the air. Next day they all go out to seek honey to make mead, and, as soon as that is prepared, they assemble in one place, at the setting of the sun, to make public demonstration of gladness. They pass the night, the married Abipones sitting on the ground on skins, the by-standing women singing with a loud voice, and the crowd of single persons laughing and applauding, by the light of torches, which shine here and there about the market-place. Some female juggler who conducts the festive ceremonies, dances at

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796 intervals, rattling a gourd full of hardish fruit-
[534] seeds to musical time, and, whirling round to
● 535 the right with one foot, and to the left with
another, without ever removing from one spot,
or in the least varying her motions. This fool-
[534] ish crazy dance is interrupted every now and
then by the horrid clangor of military trumpets,
in which the spectators join, making a loud
noise by striking their lips with their hands.
Yet in the midst of all this you can never per-
ceive the smallest deviation from strict deco-
[562] rum. The men are decently separated from
the women; the boys from the girls. The
[789] female dancer, the priestess of these ridicu-
lous ceremonies, as a mark of particular fa-
vour, rubs the thighs of some of the men with
her gourds, and, in the name of their grandfa-
ther, promises them swiftness in pursuing ene-
mies and wild beasts. At the same time the
new male and female jugglers, who are thought
equal to the office, are initiated with many ce-
remonies. Of this most mischievous descrip-
tion of men I am now going to treat more fully.

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of apron made of the longer ostrich feathers. 852
 That woman has every day the most business to 622
 perform; for in company with the other girls, [537]
 she visits all the huts, and with a hide, twisted 292
 in the form of Hercules's club, whips, puts to
 flight, and pursues all the men that she finds in
 every house, and those that are met by the way
 are soundly beaten by the girls, with the palm
 boughs. The first day is passed in this running
 up and down, amidst the laugh of the flagel-
 lated men. Next day the girls, who are distri- [526]
 buted into bands, wrestle with one another,
 and the boys do the same in a separate place.
 On the third day they are called out to dance,
 the boys on one side, and the girls on the other. [535]
 They all join hands till a circle is formed, an [534]
 old woman, the directress of the dance going
 round striking a gourd: and when after a whirl-
 ing for some time, they grow giddy, they rest
 at intervals, and then renew their dancing,
 which contains nothing worthy of admiration,
 but the patience displayed on the part both of
 the spectators and of the performers, and is
 perfectly devoid of art. On the fourth day, the [526]
 woman with the apron of ostrich feathers tra-
 verses the town, surrounded by girls, challeng-
 ing the stoutest and strongest woman she finds
 in every house, to contend with her in the
 street; and now throwing her adversary, now
 BEING HERSELF THROWN, AFFORDS AN
 AMUSING SPECTACLE TO THE ASSEMBLED
 PEOPLE.